2. Practice: Rehearsing with your slideshow

Rehearsal is essential to giving an effective presentation. Rehearsing increases your confidence, ensures you are familiar with your material and allows you to polish your presentation skills. It is important to not only practice delivering your talk, but to practice using your visual aids.

- Rehearse your presentation to yourself at first (speak in front of a mirror or to the cat), then to a friend or colleague.
- Time your rehearsal. Make sure you can complete your talk within the allotted time.
- Rehearse with your slideshow. Practicing running it at the same time as your talk will ensure that it looks and operates as you expect.
- Make sure that the structure of your talk matches the sequence of your visual aids.
- Consider the timing of your slideshow. Does it fit with your words? Is there too much on-screen movement? Too many mouse clicks too close together?

3. Performance: Managing the equipment

While PowerPoint slides add interest to a presentation, they can also add distractions and technical issues that you need to prepare for.

3.1 Before your presentation

Visit the room where you will be presenting

- Try to have a rehearsal with the equipment so you know how everything works and how to locate it.
- Make sure that your visuals are compatible and will open on the computer. Check that the visuals looks the way you intended.
- If you are using your own laptop, make sure that you are able to connect it to the overhead projector via the computer console.
- Locate the power outlet and check that you can plug in your equipment. Will you need an extension cord or a double adaptor?

Examine the layout of the room

- Where is the computer located? Where will you need to stand to operate it?
- Where is the projection screen? Do you know how to switch it on? If there is no screen, use a clean white space—a wall or whiteboard will suffice
- Where is the projector located? Where should you stand to avoid blocking the screen?
- How light is the room? Will you need to dim any lights, or close the curtains before your presentation begins?

3.1 On the day of your presentation

You're likely to feel nervous and want to concentrate on what you have to say. Preparing your equipment can increase your confidence and give you one less thing to be concerned about.

Minimise stress by getting the practical preparations out of the way. Arrive early and set up and check the equipment
before your presentation starts. Make sure that:

- The computer is running and set up correctly.
- The computer will open your slideshow file.
- The projector is switched on and in focus.
- The projection screen/area is set up.

Ask a friend or colleague who understands the technology to help you set up, and to be on hand during your presentation.

**Always have a back-up plan**

Remember that PowerPoint may look great, but technical failures do happen. To spare possible embarrassment, it’s a good idea to have a back-up. Print your slides on overhead transparencies or make slide handouts just in case.

See next: Common mistakes made using PowerPoint